



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Alcee Hastings

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley to the Permanent Council
Vienna October 4, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It gives me great pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President, Mr. Alcee Hastings of the great state of Florida, here to the Permanent Council. We support strongly the work of the Parliamentary Assembly. As Secretary Rice said at the Washington meeting in July, "Strong parliaments, representative of and answerable to the people, are essential to the defense of human liberty and the growth of vibrant democracies."

We very much appreciate the views of our parliamentarians concerning the OSCE and its work. The report on the Colloquium on the Future of the OSCE is a useful contribution to our debate on strengthening this organization. In particular, we note the section supporting the work of the OSCE on elections and election observation.

The Declaration of the Washington Meeting contains many ideas and proposals that we support and believe should be discussed by the Permanent Council for follow-up.

In addition to its main declaration, the Washington meeting adopted three supplementary resolutions concerning combating trafficking in human beings. We agree the OSCE should continue to strengthen its work to combat trafficking. We also agree the OSCE should look closely at how it can assist States in addressing the economic factors that make individuals vulnerable to trafficking. We strongly support the proposal that the Ljubljana Ministerial adopt a decision regarding the responsibilities of participating States to ensure that their military and civilian personnel do not engage in or facilitate trafficking in persons or sexual exploitation or abuse. We also strongly support the proposal for the OSCE to strengthen its code of conduct for OSCE mission members.

The resolution on improving the implementation of OSCE electoral standards and commitments and the effectiveness of OSCE election observation activities strongly supports the work of the OSCE in these areas. It recognizes "the preeminence of the OSCE election observation missions...". We agree with this, and we appreciate the support of the Russian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly in adopting this resolution, with Belarus being the only delegation to vote against the text.

The Declaration condemns the May 13 massacre in Andijon, Uzbekistan and calls for an independent investigation of this event. We continue to support this call for an investigation, and it is particularly urgent as trials of individuals arrested in connection with this event have already begun.

The Declaration stresses the importance of improving equality of opportunity between women and men in the OSCE. We agree with this, and urge all States to second more female candidates to the OSCE, particularly at higher levels.

The Parliamentary Assembly recommends increasing OSCE focus on combating corruption. We also would like to see more emphasis placed on this, and urge that there be at least one event on this topic in the next year.

Finally, we also support the call for robust funding for ODIHR, to ensure it can carry out the very many tasks we have given it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.